

# 2019 WAHO Australia Conference

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*The 2019 World Arabian Horse Organization (WAHO) Conference was held in Australia in the picturesque seaside resort of Terrigal, New South Wales at the Crowne Plaza Terrigal Pacific Hotel from February 6 – 8. Graciously hosted by the Arabian Horse Society of Australia (AHSA Ltd), there were 25 countries represented.*



Many guests had spent the previous few days enjoying Pre-Conference Tours and the Arabian Ambassadors Parade and Dinner, hosted at the East Coast Championships by the New South Wales Arabian Horse Association.

Once gathered in Terrigal, Tuesday evening saw us all greeting old friends and meeting new ones at the poolside Welcome Reception and Aussie BBQ. We were entertained by Bush Poet Carol Heuchan and Reptiles on the Road, giving guests a hands-on introduction to some of Australia's unique wildlife. Among the gifts for all participants were traditional Aussie Barmah hats, which as you can see in some of the photographs, proved extremely popular.

The General Assembly sessions took place on Wednesday and Friday. The Conference was opened by the AHSA Ltd Chairman Leonie Williamson, who gave a warm welcome and said how Australia was incredibly proud to host the WAHO Conference for the third time.

A richly illustrated and fascinating lecture From the Desert to the Lands Down Under – a brief canter through two centuries of Arabian horse breeding in Australia and New Zealand was then given by guest speakers Coralie Gordon, Allan Preston and David Gillett. Also covering the popular derivative breeds celebrated in Australia, this lecture neatly dovetailed with Hoofprints in History - Australia's Arabian Horses, the coffee-table book launched at the Conference. Coralie

Gordon, one of Australia's eminent Arabian horse historians was the author of the Australian section in the book, which is available from the AHSA Ltd office.

The General Meeting was formally convened by WAHO President Peter Pond, who thanked everyone for making the long journey to attend. He introduced the Executive Committee members and clarified that they do not represent their own country or region, they put aside their national interests to represent the interests of the Arabian horse worldwide.

Referencing the history of WAHO, more information on which can be found at the WAHO website, [www.waho.org](http://www.waho.org), Peter also gave us a delightful quote from the WAHO archives, which he said still rings true today, a sentiment we all agreed

with. It's from a speech made at the 1976 WAHO Conference by the Egyptian delegate, Dr. Mohammed Marsafi: "What is an Arabian? From my own personal point of view, the Arabian is that creature which is bred for pleasure, interest, love and pride. It is the Arabian that acts as an angel of peace, as an ambassador of humanity, and always approaches people in a respectful manner with justice and love. It is the Arabian that teaches me how to deal with people of different nationalities, languages, religions, politics, cultures and mentalities. It is the Arabian that teaches me, personally, how to make friendships and good relationships with different kinds of people in various countries. It is the Arabian that owns me and I am indebted for a lifetime for the great number of faithful friends of whom I am proud in so many countries. It is the Arabian that never fails me, at home or everywhere I go. We all know the most characteristic features of the Arabian and the instinctive high spirit, good stamina, endurance, courage, strength, vigour, elegance, intelligence, obedience, patience, etcetera. And of course the beauty! The beauty of the Arabian, which varies from eye to eye; which varies from time to time; which varies from taste to taste; which varies from region to region, from area to area, from country to country... the beauty. It is the beauty of the Arabian that teaches me the great value of consulting with others, and the great value of putting all other advice in consideration before any decision."

Apologies for absence were received and then, as at every WAHO Conference, a one-minute silence was held in memory of those members who had passed away since the last meeting.

The next agenda item covered a number of points relating to WAHO's Member countries. Peter explained it was

with great regret the Executive Committee had agreed to accept the withdrawal of Belize from WAHO Membership. Since joining WAHO in 1978, Belize has always been one of the smaller registries and they have seen a drop in the number of Arabian breeders, to the extent that maintaining WAHO membership is no longer sustainable. It's hoped a neighbouring registry will act in a caretaker capacity to register any future foals born in Belize.

WAHO's Executive Secretary Katrina Murray then read the reports on the new countries WAHO is working with to help establish their first Arabian Stud Books. At present this consists of Ukraine and Bolivia which were both later accepted by vote of the delegates as Applying Registering Authority Members of WAHO pending completion of the full application process.

The report mentioned some of the long and distinguished history of Arabian horses in Ukraine, which is closely intertwined with the history of Arabian breeding in Poland. Many of the great Polish Arabian breeders of the 19th century had immense estates in what is now Ukraine, where they bred Arabian horses of the finest quality. Despite the turbulent times, wars and destruction that have rolled over these vast fertile plains, many of the horses bred at these iconic stud farms can still be found in pedigrees today, including some of the most precious mare lines in the world.

As times changed, so did the fortunes of Arabian horses in Ukraine. Since 1976 there has been an Arabian breeding programme at the State Stud, Yahilnitsa, and until the end of the Soviet era, their horses were always registered in the Russian Arabian Stud Book, and therefore automatically WAHO approved. When this arrangement ceased, the owners and breeders were left in limbo in terms of registration of their horses. There were similar situations in the past

with Lithuania, Estonia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, all of which have gone on to produce their own independent stud books and are now WAHO Registering Authority Members in their own right.

It was reported that the Ukraine Horse Breeders Association's work on their first Arabian Stud Book is progressing very well, as they are locating and re-identifying all eligible Arabians in the country. The majority of them are based at the Arabian Department of the Yahilnitsa State Stud Farm, which has one Tersk-bred stallion and 15 broodmares, foals and youngsters. Individual owners and breeders have approximately another 50 Arabians between them, some imported from Poland and Russia. Most are used for sport, especially endurance. At the moment about ten foals are born each year.

Regarding Bolivia, whose Arabians were formerly registered for them by Brazil, it was reported that Arabian horses are increasing in popularity there and are promoted in particular as excellent saddle horses. They have two national shows a year, as well as endurance, and the horses are also used for ranch work, dressage, and of course pleasure riding. For some time, their Arabian Breeders Association, ACCA-BOLIVIA, has been working with their Ministry of Agriculture to set up their own independent Arabian Stud Book. They have been in close contact with WAHO as they try to progress this project. They are currently working on a census and re-identification of all Arabian horses in Bolivia. It is not anticipated that there will be any difficulties with approving the horses in due course, all imports are from WAHO member countries and for foals born in Bolivia they already have a robust registration process which is in compliance with WAHO rules, and the horses formerly registered for them by Brazil will simply be transferred into the new stud book.

It was further reported that WAHO is aware there are still a few countries which do not have Arabian Stud Books, but have a small number of imported registered Arabians which are now producing



- 1: Coralie Gordon spoke about Australia's early horses.
- 2: Leonie Williamson opening the WAHO Conference.
- 3: Allan Preston talked about Arabian Derivatives.
- 4: David Gillett covered the modern Australian Arabian.
- 5: WAHO President Peter Pond.





- 1: Br. Peter McIntosh (Aus) with Jehangir and Navaz Rustumjee (Bahrain) sporting their gift hats.
- 2: WAHO Executive Committee.
- 3: H.R.H Princess Alia Al Hussein Al Saleh (left) and Robyn Summerhayes at the Reptiles on the Road display.
- 4: Aussies at the Conference. Photo: K. Scherling.
- 5: At Simeon, Allan Preston with newly elected AHSA Ltd Chairman, Greg Liddle.
- 6: Artists Marian Duncan and Jill Vanstone exhibited their artwork.
- 7: Marion Richmond (Simeon Stud) with Ron Males (Ralvon Arab Stud).

foals. Sometimes other existing WAHO Member countries are asked to be their "caretaker registry" and register those horses according to all WAHO registration rules, so these foals are not lost to the breed. For example, Australia is authorised to register the Arabians in Brunei, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

WAHO is always keen to encourage any country which is experiencing a growth of interest in Arabian horses. One in particular at the moment is Albania, where there are known to be approximately 60 imported Arabians and their progeny, with several enthusiastic owners and breeders. Considerable efforts

have been made both by WAHO and the Italian Registry, ANICA, either to assist Albania to set up a Registry and start their own stud book, or alternatively to arrange for Italy to register horses on their behalf. A motion was carried that ANICA can act as the caretaker registry for the Arabian horses of Albania until such time as Albania has its own Stud Book individually approved by WAHO.

Other countries with a growing interest in Arabian horses include Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of North Macedonia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, WAHO is aware of six breeders owning between them around 30 imported Arabians as well as a few foals being born in the country. Montenegro's



request for assistance is very recent, so far WAHO is aware they have a small number of imported Arabians. There are also a handful of imported Arabians in the Republic of North Macedonia. A motion was carried that the Belgian Arabian Stud Book can caretake these countries until they have their own Stud Books individually approved by WAHO.

The introduction of the nominated candidates for the historic election of two Consultants to the WAHO Executive Committee followed. This new initiative was announced at the last Conference in 2017, and well publicised by WAHO since then. The three nominees were Dr. Mohammad Al-Nujaifi, Karsten Scherling and Nathalie Weemaels. The latter two were present and both addressed the meeting personally, expanding on the written biographies already circulated. Voting took place by secret ballot on Friday with both Karsten Scherling and Nathalie Weemaels being duly elected.

The always interesting reports from the Voting Delegates about the Arabian horse affairs in their countries took up the rest of the day. As the Syrian delegate was unable to be present due to visa issues, his report was read out by the Executive Secretary, and it was heartening to note that their Arabian breeding and activities are slowly recovering. A detailed sheet giving information about all WAHO Member countries was also distributed. The most popular activities are showing, racing and endurance. Several countries, mainly in the Middle East, have seen considerable growth in the number of foals registered each year, others elsewhere in the world have seen numbers hold steady, or decline due to a variety of reasons. Obviously not all the statistic from 2018 were yet available, but for the figures provided for 2017, countries registering more than 1,000 foals annually were USA: 3,153 foals; Saudi Arabia 3,008; Turkey 1,800; Egypt 1,700; France 1,486; Kuwait 1,340; United Arab Emirates 1,081.

The day concluded with another get-together over a delightful 'street food' buffet celebrating international cuisine.

Thursday was for many the most highly anticipated day of the Conference, as two of Australia's iconic Arabian horse breeders generously threw open their doors to all the Conference guests. Visits to Simeon Stud and Mulawa Arabian Stud are always sensational, educational and memorable.

After an early breakfast everyone boarded the coach to travel to Simeon Stud at Dural. Upon arrival we meandered

- 8: Arabian filly, Simeon Suzette.
- 9: Arabian stallion, Simeon Shanun.
- 10: Arabian mare, Simeon Shagah.
- 11: Nathalie Weemaels (Ecuador) at Simeon Stud.





down the sloping driveway towards the stables, while observing beautiful mares and foals grazing peacefully in rolling green paddocks. The world-renowned Simeon Stud has been a global leader in the breed for over 60 years. The stud was founded in 1956 by Ruth and Peter Simon with their daughter Marion.

Marion Richmond is the visionary breeder behind the stud today. She warmly welcomed the WAHO visitors and enthusiastically talked about each horse which was paraded for us in family groups. These spectacular mare families consisted of 27 Ibn Galal-5 (Ibn Galal x 10 Hosna 71), Ramses Tinah (Ramses Fayek x Ramses Nagdia), Raffaalaa (Dalul x BF Bahaala), Mussallah (Montasar x Mohebba Bint Maymoonah), Wed Albadeia (Farid Albadeia x Momtazat Albadeia), Etaya Sharon (Imperial Im Mahal x Abitibi Harmonie), Simeon Setavi (Simeon Sadik x Nameeza) and Simeon Shoshana (MB Talmaar x MB Masaleena).

After the parade we had a delicious lunch and Marion invited us to walk around the paddocks where we could see the horses close up while interacting with them, a testimony to their superb temperaments.

We then travelled onto Mulawa Arabian Stud, a short distance away at Berrilee. As we walked down the laneway to the impressive stables, we observed beautiful horses popping their heads out of the windows to greet us. One of Australia’s leading Arabian horse farms, Mulawa Arabian Stud was established around five decades ago by the Farrell family. Today Greg, Julie and Jane Farrell remain committed to the desert ideal of the elegant athlete, creating Arabian horses that possess the ultimate combination of both beauty and utility.

Scott Benjamin did a sterling job as presenter during our visit. There were 14 impressive Arabians paraded and the mare families represented were Mulawa Chance (Ambition x Grojecca), Dzina (Buszmen x Dzisna), Sahtarah (Sahjat x Dantarah), DM Mercedes True Love (RHR Mercedes x GR Katalina), M Angelique (Vision x Abanda) with the Karmaa (Kaborr x AN Marieta) family being the largest.

After this presentation the WAHO visitors chatted over an enjoyable meal and before long, it was time to travel back to our hotel. Everyone agreed it had been a memorably brilliant day.

Friday was the final Conference day where further WAHO General Assembly business was completed. As is customary at these events, there was an excellent line-up of keynote guest speakers, which were scheduled for this day. For the first time ever, one talk was delivered by video. Dr. Madeleine Campbell of the Royal Veterinary College UK, a specialist in Equine Reproduction; Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law, was unable to attend in person. Her detailed and enlightening video presentation, entitled Welfare and Ethical Issues in Horse Breeding was shown in the morning, before the later discussions on WAHO rules, in order for everyone to be aware of potential welfare and ethical implications of certain assisted reproduction

techniques. It was particularly interesting to note her remark, when referring to past lectures at WAHO Conferences, that “Arabian breeders are not afraid of airing and discussing difficult issues. That makes you rare amongst horse breeders.”

Peter informed the delegates that, as promised at the 2017 Conference, he had written a strong letter to the F.E.I with WAHO’s collective concerns about the welfare of endurance horses. WAHO keeps up to date with what’s happening in endurance and will if necessary write a further letter to the F.E.I. To follow up on their commitment to endurance horses, WAHO invited as a keynote speaker one of the world’s leading experts on the causes and prevention of injuries in race and endurance horses, Professor Chris Whitton, who leads equine orthopaedic research at the University of Melbourne. His two lectures on this topic, before and after the lunch break, were extremely informative and an eye-opener for every equestrian. Summing up his talk in a few words, he emphasised the importance of exercise even in younger horses, and of limiting the accumulation of bone fatigue and maximising bone repair by reducing speed and training intensity and allowing sufficient rest periods.

Peter also spoke about China, which has been an Applying Member of WAHO since 2017 and is now making good progress on tracking down and re-identifying the many imported horses, and on recording all their foals born in China to date. They are well advanced with their registration procedures which are in line with WAHO rules. They had hoped their first studbook would be ready to present by now, however, due to the vast size of China, a country where the concept of registration and studbooks is a novel one, that has not yet been possible. The WAHO office is working closely with the Chinese registry by email to complete the work before the next Conference. Dr. Wang Zhen Shan was acknowledged for his dedication, hard work and excellent achievements to date.

Treasurer Caroline Sussex reported that WAHO’s income and expenditure remained much the same as in previous years, although considerably enhanced in 2017 by a very generous donation from the King of Bahrain. In order to continue balancing the books, she advised there will be increases to all categories of WAHO membership fees from January 1, 2020.

Xavier Guibert, Chairman of the WAHO World Registrars Meeting, gave an overview of their meeting which took place on 5th February. He told us about the



**1:** WAHO Treasurer Caroline Sussex (UK) at Simeon. **2:** Stallion, Vangelis MI at Mulawa. **3:** Visitors at Simeon Stud. **4:** Stallion, Konquest MI at Mulawa.



complex new requirements for importing horses into the European Union which will need to be followed by non EU countries. He confirmed it had been agreed that the WAHO name change rule would not be altered at this time, and neither would the WAHO rules prohibiting the use of In Vitro fertilization or the rules prohibiting the registration of clones or the progeny of clones. Interesting facts were provided about the number of embryo transfer (ET) foals in some countries, in particular where multiple foals per year per mare are allowed under domestic rules. There was a strong feeling that although it was not enforceable due mainly to restraint of trade laws, educating breeders to limit themselves to producing a maximum of two ET foals per mare per year was broadly supported, on welfare grounds. He also informed us that as Registries

**5:** Stallion, MI Klassique at Mulawa. **6:** Colt, Kharacter MI at Mulawa. **7:** Stallion, Aamahni at Mulawa. **8:** Colt, Truth MI at Mulawa.

move away from producing costly printed studbooks, WAHO had proposed a set of new rules and recommendations for those studbooks produced only on .pdf, and for those with online studbooks, the text of which was later unanimously agreed by vote of the delegates.

A current major concern to WAHO is the very new issue of genetic modification, gene editing and gene doping. Many readers will have heard about gene therapy in humans, which is the insertion of a gene to cure or treat a disease, something that of course is beneficial. On the other hand, gene doping is the insertion of a gene to improve performance. Gene editing, on the other hand, is the actual alteration





of a gene, using so-called 'biological scissors', at the embryo stage. Nobody yet knows what effect this gene editing and gene doping will have on the horses themselves, or on their progeny. The racing and sport horse authorities such as the I.S.B.C. and F.E.I are equally concerned and have already introduced their own rules on this. Several laboratories and genetic scientists are also working hard to develop new tests to detect altered genes. After some interesting discussion and additional information from Carlos Ezcurra, the delegate from Argentina, a country where some of these scientific advances, including large-scale cloning of polo ponies, are now commonplace, a new mandatory WAHO rule was unanimously agreed, to be effective immediately, which reads as follows:

#### Genetic Modification Gene Editing and Gene Doping

1. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian horse of any age which has been subjected to any form of genetic modification at the embryo stage or later must not be registered under any circumstances.
2. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the progeny of any Arabian horse which was subjected to any form of genetic modification at the embryo stage or later must not be registered under any circumstances.
3. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian horse of any age which has been conceived using genetically modified gametes must not be registered under any circumstances.
4. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the progeny of any Arabian horse which was conceived using genetically modified gametes must not be registered under any circumstances.

The remainder of the day was taken up with the guest speakers. We hope to include more details from these lectures in the next issue of this magazine. Apart from Dr. Campbell's video presentation

and Professor Whitton's two talks already mentioned above, Julie Fiedler from Australia's University of Central Queensland spoke about When Social Media Gallops Ahead – Sport Horse Welfare and Social Licence to Operate. This highlighted the influence of how public perception of horse sports can become very negative, and how we must all take care to ensure the welfare of the horses is seen to be proactively respected.

It all Begins with a Foal: Practical new Techniques in Foaling Practices and Foal Care, from Birth to Weaning was a fascinating lecture by the renowned American expert Cindy Reich. An especially important section was her explanation of the Madigan Foal Squeeze Procedure, a lifesaver for newborn 'dummy foals'. Developed by John Madigan DVM at UC-Davis in USA, this involves wrapping the affected foal's upper body in a certain way with loops of soft rope and applying pressure for 20 minutes, which replicates the compression a foal experiences that releases hormones which keep it immobilised during birth. NMS foals do not make the transition to full consciousness at birth, so this 'squeeze' helps them relax back into a deep sleep, and then when pressure is released, they 'wake up' normally. During the tea break, it was possible to practice the technique using a large cuddly toy foal specially provided for the purpose. Anyone who breeds horses is strongly encouraged to educate themselves about this technique, there is a wealth of information and video clips available online.

During Peter Pond's closing address, he announced to sustained applause that Jordan will be hosting the next WAHO Conference in 2021. HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein then made the formal invitation, with a short presentation of some fascinating historical and current photos of Arabian horses in Jordan, and a brief film highlighting some of the country's history and attractions.

This friendly, productive and enjoyable 2019 Conference ended with a splendid Gala Dinner, including an Art Auction and just the right type of music for dancing the night away. The next morning, many guests set out on the selection of Post Conference tours to the Hunter Valley, Queensland, Victoria and New Zealand, during which they would have the opportunity to see many more examples of our beautiful Arabians and Arabian Derivatives.

WAHO Conferences really are unique and have to be experienced to be truly appreciated. We are all now looking forward to WAHO Jordan 2021 and hope to see you there. U

- 1: Cindy Reich spoke about foals.
- 2: Keynote guest speaker Professor Chris Whitton.
- 3: Julie Fiedler talked about Social Media.
- 4: Art Auctioneer Carlos Ezcurra (Argentina).